



Remarks by

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Homemade Explosives Threat

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Good morning. Thank you. I am honored to be here and grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today about the global threat posed by IEDs. I would like to thank the sponsor for hosting this conference and focusing attention on this issue. The IED is the weapon of choice for our adversaries and will confront us as a threat long after our forces end their current missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, so this is a great forum to share views on this enduring threat.

First, let me provide a little background on the counter-IED effort. We saw the threat posed by IED attacks begin to emerge shortly after U.S. troops arrived in Afghanistan but, as many of us witnessed first-hand their lethality became clear in Iraq in 2003. With the increased use of IEDs, the Department of Defense established many initiatives, including the Joint IED Defeat Organization, or JIEDDO, in 2006 to lead the Department's counter-IED activities.

Our mission is to lead the Defense Department's actions to rapidly provide counter-IED capabilities in support of combatant commanders, through rapid acquisition, tactical operations-intelligence fusion and pre-deployment training. We are singularly focused on this problem and fielding capabilities to reduce the effectiveness of the IED.

While IEDs cannot stop our units, or deter our commanders and soldiers from taking the fight to the enemy, these devices are the greatest source of casualties in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The cumulative effects of casualties, both killed and wounded in action, inflicted on our forces and magnified by insurgent information operations, have made IEDs, a strategic challenge for the United States, and therefore a top priority for the Department of Defense.

To counter the IED and attack the networks that use them, we focus our activities on three lines of operation: Defeat the Device, Train the Force and Attack the Network.

To enable a successful counter-IED program, these lines of operation must work in harmony. Let me briefly discuss each.

Defeating the device is the immediate and most obvious approach to protecting our service members from IEDs. As hard as we try, we can't stop every IED from being employed. However, once the IED finds its way to the battlefield, we have fielded a wide spectrum of initiatives to detect the components, neutralize the triggering devices and mitigate the effects of an IED blast.

Defeating the device is critical to lowering effective attacks and casualties. If we fail in this task, we could experience an unacceptable level of casualties, resulting in loss of will and ultimately mission failure. However, while defeating the device is important, it is not decisive. Focusing solely on defeating the device relegates us to playing defense and surrenders the initiative to the enemy.

The second area in which we focus our efforts – and one that cannot be overlooked – is training. The Train the Force line of operation brings our deploying warfighters up-to-speed on the full range of available counter-IED tools and the latest tactics, techniques and procedures emerging from theater. A well-trained Soldier and Marine is our best counter-IED weapon. However, we still have work to do in our pre-deployment training.

Because we have immediately pushed all of our counter-IED systems forward, where they belong, with none held in reserve, presently, a large amount of training on these systems takes place in-theater. Sufficient amounts of training equipment are not available to meet the demands of home station, combat training center and in-theater RSOI training.

We are taking a holistic look at our training approach, starting with home station through in-theater training, to identify how we can enable a more comprehensive pre-deployment training program to minimize in-theater training requirements. (First weeks – situational awareness – hectic – first time) We are also working to ensure in-theater technologies are available at each of the pre-deployment training venues. The end state is a well-trained Soldier, Marine and a battle

staff that have had time to understand the integration of all aspects of the counter-IED fight before deploying.

Our third line of operation, Attack the Network, which is the focus of my comments today, is the decisive endeavor. It encompasses all the material and non-material counter -IED enablers to attack the network by first identifying, and then exploiting, critical enemy network vulnerabilities. Attacking the Network is the most complex line of operation – but it is how we achieve decisive results.

In a minute I will discuss the present attack the network challenge and what this community can do to meet this challenge, but first let me put the IED threat in context.

IEDs are – and, I believe, will remain – an enduring global threat. Over 500 IED attacks occur outside of Iraq and Afghanistan on a monthly basis. IEDs, and the networks that employ them, will be a threat to our troops in operations for the foreseeable future and will continue to also pose a threat here at home.

In Iraq, there are still typically 400 to 500 IED events per month. Recently there has been a spike in the use of Explosively Formed Projectiles, or EFPs, by Shiite Extremist Groups in Iraq. EFPs are specifically designed to penetrate and defeat armored vehicles and are the most effective casualty-causing IED in Iraq and we are seeing increased sophistication and precision in these EFP attacks.

As we know, Iran continues to provide funding, weapons and training to Shiite militants operating in Iraq, to include EFP technology and equipment as well as mortars, rockets and other weapons. It's assessed that Iran will continue to support Shiite militants with lethal aid to maintain their influence in Iraq, and I fully expect these groups to try to “bloody our nose” on our way out of Iraq over the next six months.

On Saturday I returned from a trip to Iraq. I am very concerned the recent EFP spike is really the leading edge of a concerted effort to increase attacks on our forces and shape the post-2011 landscape in Iraq. So it is imperative that we do not take our eye off the support to Operation New Dawn. But now, let's turn to Afghanistan, so I can share with you what I believe is our greatest counter-IED intelligence requirement and the main message I have for you today.

In Afghanistan, IED activity in the first quarter of 2011 has remained consistently high, with more than 1,200 events per month. However, the rate of detonations which produce casualties remains relatively low, around 11 percent of these 1,200 events.

As you know, the counter-insurgency fight in Afghanistan has required an increase of dismounted operations to reach the population and to press the fight in southern Afghanistan.

These effective counter-insurgency operations have resulted in increased intelligence and tips from the local population, resulting in dramatic increases, around 218 percent, in found and cleared IEDs and caches. Such operations however, pose a new set of challenges for our counter-IED fight.

The number of IED incidents against dismounted troops has increased over 50 percent since last year. And although the number of effective attacks has remained constant over the same period, the severity of injuries from these effective attacks has increased during the past year. That is why reducing the effectiveness of IED attacks against dismounts is my number one priority.

To counter the threat our dismounted troops face, our latest counter-IED Defeat the Device efforts have supplied IED detection dogs, handheld detectors, and a variety of ISR capabilities to improve the warfighters ability to identify networks and find emplaced devices and sources of processing.

In the counter-IED fight in Afghanistan, the growth of the use of homemade explosives, or HME, is still our greatest concern. 84 percent of the IEDs use against our troops in Afghanistan have HME as the main charge and are almost exclusively derived from calcium ammonium nitrate fertilizer produced in Pakistan.

Calcium ammonium nitrate, often referred to as CAN-26 (26 percent nitrogen), was developed by fertilizer manufacturers to be a non-detonable alternative to pure ammonium nitrate. It contains 25 percent inert material (Calcium Carbonate). This highly valued and legitimate fertilizer is reprocessed by insurgents and then used as an HME main charge.

Insurgents routinely use two approaches to reprocess CAN-26 before sensitizing it with a fuel. The very soluble ammonium nitrate can be separated from insoluble carbonate by dissolving it in hot water and decanting the concentrated ammonium nitrate solution. Excess water is evaporated and the ammonium nitrate is dried and crushed. CAN-26 can also be ground to a fine powder without extracting the inert material. In both cases, “paint flake” aluminum, powdered sugar or a combination of both are added to increase the explosive power and sensitivity.

During the last 12 months an unending supply of CAN-26, originating almost exclusively from Pakistan, has been used to produce IEDs in Afghanistan despite a countrywide ban on the import of ammonium nitrate. CAN-26 is produced by two factories in Pakistan, each producing between 420,000 to 450,000 metric tons annually. During the last year, an estimated 480,000 pounds of CAN-26 was used to make IEDs in Afghanistan. However, this represents only .05 percent of the annual production capacity of these two factories. The continued uncontrolled availability of CAN-26 and other HME precursor material smuggled into Afghanistan from Pakistan is, in my opinion, the most significant factor contributing to the Afghan IED problem.

I believe Pakistan is the center of gravity for the counter-IED effort in Afghanistan. The vast majority of IED components, including commercial explosives, radio-control triggers, and HME precursors are sourced from, and/or transmitted through Pakistan.

The Afghanistan IED threat cannot be defeated without addressing the networks and precursors in Pakistan. We must disrupt the flow of CAN-26 and other IED components from Pakistan. Success against the supply of HME precursor materials is essential to reduce the effects of IEDs on our forces, as well as on government personnel and civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan and presents the greatest opportunity for productive collaboration among all government agencies, especially those in the intelligence community.

As I stated earlier, and as this community knows, attacking enemy networks will produce decisive results. But first, we must define and build a common picture of the HME network in Pakistan. Only then, can we focus our efforts on their critical vulnerabilities that have the most significant potential for impacting the enemy network as a whole.

No single U.S. department or international partner has the ability to limit access to precursors. To defeat the Pakistan-produced, HME-fueled IEDs in Afghanistan, the solution requires integrated efforts and leveraging the combined authorities, policies and capabilities of many agencies of our government, coalition partners – and especially the intelligence community.

Recognizing the significant threat HME poses to coalition forces in Afghanistan; JIEDDO recently proposed an interagency process designed to transform a community of interest into a community of action.

To meet the challenge of Pakistan HME, we are proposing an HME strategy that is intended to reduce the flow of HME precursors from Pakistan and disrupt the ability of insurgent networks to effectively use IEDs against coalition forces. This developing strategy will:

- First – produce a common picture of the HME value chain and its critical vulnerabilities;
- Second – synchronize and leverage the authorities and capabilities of the U.S., coalition and international partners;
- And third – facilitate a timely and unified whole-of-government approach.

I believe that only a comprehensive strategy will provide the framework needed to successfully address this challenge.

Nearly every part of our government already contributes to the effort to generally defeat the IED as a weapon of strategic influence. Our interagency partners bring expertise in:

- Defeating and prosecuting criminal networks;
- Applying financial pressures and going after the assets of IED network members or financiers;
- Enacting export controls and treaty compliance efforts that lead to the interdiction of IED components;
- Advancing counter-IED objectives through public diplomacy and soft power support;
- Advising on legitimate agricultural requirements; and
- Coordinating and executing domestic counter-IED efforts.

This is by no means a comprehensive list of the contributions our interagency partners can bring to the counter-IED fight, but rather a sampling to give you an idea of the collaboration that occurs on all levels.

For this audience, I'd like to point out again that we need to have a clear understanding of the HME supply chain that stretches from the factories in Pakistan to the border of Afghanistan. A focused approach is needed to provide clarity on how insurgents in Pakistan obtain and transport CAN in order to enable effective interdiction.

The intelligence community should make understanding the Pakistan HME network a top priority. Right now, it is not! As such, here are some areas where your assistance is needed.

We need to identify the key facilitators of raw materials supplying the HME pipeline into Afghanistan. We also need to identify specific financial networks and funding streams for these HME networks, as well as identifying those key financiers.

As I said earlier, we must develop our understanding of the HME network in Pakistan in order to achieve success. Unless we neutralize this network, through a whole-of-government approach, we will never defeat the IED threat confronting our troops in Afghanistan.

In closing, IEDs are a global, whole-of-government issue...an enduring threat that will be with us at home and abroad for the foreseeable future. As you all know, IEDs have been employed with devastating effects around the world – from Mexico, to Madrid, London, Bali, Colombia, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Russia to name a few. Vehicle-borne IEDs have been the weapon of choice in high-profile and lethal attacks on U.S. embassies in Lebanon, Kenya, and Tanzania and military and government targets in Yemen, Germany and Oklahoma City.

We have made tremendous progress in bringing together a counter-IED community of interest with partners in the intelligence and law enforcement arenas, as well as with allied countries. Despite this progress and as I said earlier, there is still much work needed. Again, I ask for your assistance in addressing the issues I outlined this morning. The support of the intelligence community is critical to disrupting the HME value chain and to executing a successful, long-term counter-IED effort.

We are never going to stop all IEDs, but with a holistic, decisive, whole-of-government approach...we will significantly impact the effect the IED has on the battlespace and around the

globe. Your efforts and products are essential to this effort. Thank you and I look forward to our continued close cooperation in the future. I appreciate your time and attention this morning.